

Love of community for Con Gen Mario and RJ

Written by Manuel Caballero
Friday, 02 September 2016 13:36



Aug. 27 send-off party at the Galloping Hill Caterers in Union, N.J. for Consul General Mario Lopez de Leon, Jr. At right is his wife Eleanor.



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LET me write first about the native country.

Despite the best intentions of President Rodrigo Duterte for his country, he is sadly perceived around the world as anti-democratic leader who disregards the law.

The famous Winston Churchill saying, “a riddle wrapped up in an enigma,” could be applied to Uncle Digong Duterte at this point.

Will he continue with his policy of “Bang, Bang, Patay!?”

When will he stop the killings?

After 60 days in office, some 2,000 suspected drug-traffickers and users had been killed either by police or by “unidentified gunmen.”

As long as he keeps giving his men the “shoot to kill” order, we will continue to remind him that there is another way (suasion and rehabilitation) to do what he wants to accomplish.

For 40 years, Mexico also used bullets to fight the drug problem.

But, the drug menace continues in that country to this day.

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Thailand also resorted to killing of thousands of drug people.

But, the effort was a failure.

The Japan Times is the latest globally-respected newspaper which editorialized President Duterte's anti-drug campaign.

It was titled "Duterte's threat to democracy."

To us, the editorial was incisive and objective.

Below are some of what it said.

"Since Rodrigo Duterte became president of the Philippines two months ago, the country has waged a vicious war against the drug trade. The number of victims will soon reach 2,000, a horrific number. The mounting death toll should come as no surprise. Duterte campaigned on a law and order platform, his reputation was built on this image and there was no reason to think that he would moderate his behavior if he moved to Malacañang Palace. The drug problem may well constitute a national crisis, but that cannot excuse the shredding of the rule of law and extrajudicial killings. Human rights extend to the guilty and the innocent alike...

"The loss of innocent lives or the settling of scores under the guise of cleaning up the drug trade is one problem. Even more worrying over the long run is the erosion of the rule of law in a country with a long history of abuse of power. Filipinos have struggled to reclaim their democracy and it has been a long and frustrating process. Duterte is only the most recent in a long line of autocrats who have been irritated by the inefficiencies of a democratically elected government. Corruption has been and continues to be a real problem in the Philippines. But the solution to that problem is rigid and neutral application of the law — not its disregard."

All of the earlier criticisms against Uncle Digong Duterte had been about his apparent lack of

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respect for the law as he carries out his anti-drug campaign.

They are all about balancing his project with concomitant rights of the citizens.

Nobody has asked him to stop his campaign.

It's the killing they want him to stop.

Like I have written before, no matter how imperfect democracy is, it is still the best form of government.

A government of laws, and not of men.

Hopefully, Pres. Duterte's meeting with Pres. Obama next week in Laos would result in some modifications in Uncle Digong's approach to the drug problem.

Two good byes to two beloved community persons!

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Since Consul General Mario Lopez de Leon, Jr. announced the end of his term in New York, we have witnessed first-hand, the love of the community for him and his wife Eleanor.

Before his term was extended from June 30 to Sept. 30, countless send-off or *despedida* parties were held from February to June all over the Northeast, his duty jurisdiction.

After the extension became known, more parties were scheduled and held.

Evidently, the last two were held on Aug. 20 (PAFCOM) and Aug. 27 (some 15 groups led by D'Catbalogans and citizens from Fair Lawn, N.J.).

Back in January, leaders of various community organizations in the Northeast wrote then DFA Secretary Albert del Rosario pleading that Con Gen Mario's term be extended by a year until he reaches his retirement age next year.

Unfortunately, the Secretary resigned before he was able to act on the letter.

So, we say good bye with love and friendship, Ambassador and Mrs. Mario de Leon, Jr.

(Belatedly, I learned from my friend RG Reyes [another *guwapo Pinoy* in California] that he and Con Gen Mario were high school classmates in San Beda in Manila. So, they have a link to President Rodrigo Duterte who finished his law degree from the same school.)

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1.6. When you fly away on a flight, you can't help but feel a sense of community. It's a feeling that comes from the people you meet on the plane, the people who are with you for a few hours, but who can make a big difference in your life. I've been flying for a long time, and I've met some of the most amazing people. They are the ones who make the flight so much more enjoyable. They are the ones who make you feel like you're not just a passenger, but a part of the community. If you're looking for a way to connect with people, flying is a great option. It's a chance to meet new people, to share stories, and to create memories. So next time you fly, take a moment to appreciate the community around you. You never know when you'll need it most. mcball241@aol.com